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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 ASMARA 000746

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DEPARTMENT FOR DS/IP/AF, DS/IP/ITA, DS/ICI/CT, DS/OFM AND  
AF/E  
LONDON AND PARIS FOR AFRICA WATCHERS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 09/17/2032  
TAGS: [ASEC](#) [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PINR](#) [ER](#)  
SUBJECT: PURPORTED GSE RESPONSE TO STATE SPONSOR OF  
TERRORISM DESIGNATION

REF: ASMARA 718

Classified By: RSO SEAN MCCLANAHAN FOR REASON 1.4 (B) AND (D)

¶1. (S/NF) SUMMARY: RSO met with Source who provided third-hand information on Eritrean views towards being designated a State Sponsor of Terrorism by the USG. Source said that a contact in the Government of the State of Eritrea (GSE) Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) claims the GSE fully anticipates being added to this List. The MFA contact also told Source that during the September Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) conference held in Tehran, officials from the Cuban, Iranian and Venezuelan delegations assured GSE attendees in private meetings that their governments would provide aid if Eritrea were added to the U.S. State Sponsors of Terrorism List. MFA contact also stated the GSE plans on using dual national citizens for official travel to the United States in order to bypass any American prohibitions on visas to Eritrean citizens. END SUMMARY.

¶2. (S/NF) RSO met with Source on 09/11/2007. As reported in Reftel, Source has a friendly relationship with Tiageze Kiflezge, a junior desk officer in the MFA's America's division. Source has provided reliable information to the RSO in the past.

¶3. (S/NF) Source stated he met with Kiflezge on 09/10/07. During the conversation, Kiflezge asked if Source had heard about the latest public statements from A/S Jendayi Frazer about U.S. intentions to add Eritrea to the State Sponsors of Terrorism List. Source stated he had not, and Kiflezge pulled out a copy of a BBC article citing comments made by Frazer on 09/08/07 while in Addis Ababa about placing Eritrea on the List. Kiflezge stated they (the GSE) were certain that Eritrea would be put on the List based on these statements and in light of the closure of the Oakland Consulate.

¶4. (S/NF) Kiflezge then stated the GSE did not care if Eritrea was put on the List, nor was the GSE concerned about related sanctions. Kiflezge explained to Source that Eritrea has virtually no bilateral trade with the U.S. Therefore, economic sanctions would not hurt Eritrea. He added that the GSE could bypass any U.S. visa restrictions on Eritreans by using dual-national Eritrean-Americans to conduct its official business in the U.S. Dual-national Eritreans from

other European countries could also bypass visa restrictions.

Kiflezge stated the GSE already uses this strategy; for example, Minister of Health Saleh Meky, a dual U.S.-Eritrean citizen, has traveled to the U.S. in the past to conduct GSE business. (NOTE: Post is fully aware that Meky has been sent by the GSE on fund-raising trips in the U.S. Meky was also among the officials representing the GSE at UNGA last year. END NOTE.)

15. (S/NF) Kiflezge also mentioned to Source that GSE officials had received assurances of assistance from Iranian, Venezuelan and Cuban officials at the recent NAM meetings on Human Rights and Cultural Diversity held in Tehran in early September 2007. Kiflezge reported these government representatives told the GSE attendees, "We are on your side. Don't worry about what is going to happen." Kiflezge did not reveal what type of aid these countries had pledged. However, he stated the GSE officials and Iranians has also talked about expediting the opening of an Iranian Embassy in Asmara.

16. (S/NF) RSO Comments: Other sources have also indicated to post personnel that the GSE fully expects to be placed on the State Sponsors of Terrorism List. We find the GSE's reportedly blase attitude in keeping with the government's usual public stance when faced with threats or, alternatively, incentives for engagement from the international community. However, post believes the GSE leadership may not be as unconcerned as they profess, as evidenced by comments made to Charge in a recent meeting at the MFA about the "unhelpfulness of A/S Frazer's statements" and a flurry of anti-U.S. articles/editorials in the GSE-owned press deriding U.S. regional policies and A/S

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Frazer's remarks, and pointedly denying U.S. and UN charges of Eritrean support to terrorist groups.

17. (S/NF) The reported discussions between GSE officials and the Cuban, Venezuelan and Iranian delegations are fully consistent with GSE actions over the last year to find new friends outside of the U.S. camp - actions which have included an increase in government-to-government interactions with Iran as well as reported overtures by the GSE to the Venezuelans during the 2006 NAM/UNGA meetings. If the GSE leadership truly believes a designation as a State Sponsor of Terrorism is on the horizon, and in particular, that this action is part of a pattern of growing USG hostility towards the GSE, we may well see increased efforts by the Eritreans to cultivate ties with a variety of nations unfriendly to U.S. interests.

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